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Meeting with Mike Armacost and Mort Abramowitz

25 July 1986

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25 July 1986

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT: Luncheon Meeting with Under Secretary of State for Political
Affairs Michael Armacost, Mort Abramowitz, Clair George and
Dick Kerr, Friday, 25 July, 1230, in DCI Dining Room

TAB A The Philippines: The Bases Issue. [REDACTED] 25X1
[REDACTED] At Tab A you 25X1
will find a recent NID item and an Embassy cable assessing recent
developments with regard to the constitutional committee and the bases
issue. We've also included copies of a typescript from the DI on our
views of the troubled Aquino-Enrile relationship, in case you wish to pass
them on.

TAB B [REDACTED] 25X1

NO TAB [REDACTED] 25X1

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INFO RUHQHQA/USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RHMRRARK/13THAF CLARK AB RP PRIORITY
RUHJWXA/COMUSNAVPHIL SUBIC BAY RP PRIORITY
BT
S E C R E T MANILA 23494

EXDIS

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD
MILITARY ADDRESSEES HANDLE AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PGOV, RP
SUBJECT: CONCOM AND THE BASES

REFS: (A) MANILA 23164, (B) MANILA 23310

1. (S - ENTIRE TEXT).

2. SUMMARY: KEY CONCOM SUPPORTERS OF THE BASES REMAIN
CONCERNED ABOUT THE LACK OF EVIDENT SUPPORT FROM
PRESIDENT AQUINO ON THE BASES, FOLLOWING THEIR OWN
APPEALS FOR HER SUPPORT, AND REGARDING THE WEAK
LEADERSHIP OF CONCOM PRESIDENT MUNCZ-PALMA. THEY PROFESS

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TO HAVE 30 VOTES OUT OF 49 IN THE CCNCOM BUT SAY THEY ARE SOFT VOTES. THEY REGARD SPEAKER LAUREL AS A WEAK REED ON WHICH TO LEAN AND HAVE SUGGESTED THAT MRS. AQUINO ASK HER MINISTERS TO CALL THE 30 CENTRISTS TO MARSHALL THEIR SUPPORT. ALTERNATIVELY, IN THEIR VIEW, MRS. AQUINO WILL HAVE TO INTERVENE HERSELF. THEY SAY THIS WEEK IS THE TIME TO LINE UP THEIR FORCES AND THAT PLENARY VOTING MAY OCCUR NEXT WEEK. I WENT OVER THIS GROUND AGAIN WITH TEDDY LOCSIN, WHO SAID HE WOULD TAKE IT UP AGAIN WITH THE PRESIDENT. END SUMMARY

3. AT A DINNER JULY 22 FOR AID ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR CHARLIE GREENLEAF, I HAD A CHANCE TO DISCUSS THE CONCOM WITH THREE KEY AQUINO SUPPORTERS, ALL OF WHOM STRONGLY OPPOSE TREATMENT OF THE BASES OR OTHER "LEGISLATIVE" MATTERS IN THE CONSTITUTION. THE THREE ARE DICK ROMULO (SON OF THE GENERAL AND A PROMINENT LAWYER), JOSE "PEPS" BENGZON (ANOTHER LAWYER AND BROTHER OF THE HEALTH MINISTER), AND CHRIS MONSOD (THE CHAIRMAN OF NAMFREL AND HUSBAND OF THE NEDA MINISTER WINNIE MONSOD). ALL THREE WERE EAGER TO TALK AND EXPRESS THEIR CONCERNS.

4. ALL THREE VOLUNTEERED THEIR CONCERN ABOUT THE BASES ISSUE, SAYING THAT THE LEFT WAS WELL ORGANIZED, DISCIPLINED AND FOCUSED ON THE ISSUE. THE 17 NATIONALISTS WERE THERE FROM DAY TO NIGHT WHILE MANY OF THE AQUINO SUPPORTERS WERE MORE ELDERLY OR DISTRACTED BY OTHER COMMITMENTS. MONSOD SAID THE THREE HAD ESTABLISHED "ROW CAPTAINS" TO KEEP THEIR SUPPORTERS PRESENT AT THEIR DESK FOR KEY VOTES, BUT IT WAS NOT GOING TOO WELL. ALL THREE AGREED THAT THE CONCOM LEADERSHIP WAS DEFICIENT. MUNOZ-PALMA WAS "TOO OLD, HAD A HEARING PROBLEM AND DID NOT WANT TO APPEAR PUSHY." NAP RAMA, THE FLOOR LEADER, ALSO WAS INADEQUATE.

5. BENGZON SAID THERE WERE ABOUT 30 AQUINO SUPPORTERS -- MORE THAN ENOUGH TO WIN ANY VOTE ON THE FLOOR -- BUT MUCH OF THIS SUPPORT WAS "SOFT AND UNRELIABLE." HE SAID MANY OF THEM WERE PLIABLE, FEARFUL OF BEING

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CRITICIZED BY THE PRESS OR ATTACKED BY THE LEFT. (NINEZ CACHO-OLIVARES IN BUSINESS DAY AND LOUIS BELTRAN IN THE INQUIRER -- NOT TO MENTION MORE RADICAL COLUMNISTS -- HAVE BEEN BANGING AWAY AT THE NEED TO USE THIS SINGULAR OPPORTUNITY TO ASSERT PHILIPPINE SOVEREIGNTY.) BENGZON AND ROMULO SAID THE KEY QUESTION, THEREFORE, WAS HOW TO STIFFEN THE BACKBONES OF CORY'S CENTRIST SUPPORTERS.

6. BENGZON SAID HE HAD MET WITH THE PRESIDENT PRIVATELY ABOUT TEN DAYS AGO "TO EXPLAIN THE CONCOM REALITIES." HE HAD GONE OVER THE BASES ISSUE, NOTED THE LEFTIST PRESSURES FOR "FREE EVERYTHING" (EDUCATION, WELFARE, ETC.) AND THE COUNTRY'S INABILITY TO SUPPORT SUCH A WELFARE STATE. HE HAD ARGUED AGAINST LEFTIST PROPOSALS REQUIRING 100 PERCENT PHILIPPINE OWNERSHIP OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS. HE ALSO HAD URGED MRS. AGUIÑO TO ACT ON JUSTICE MINISTER GONZALES' LONG-STANDING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEW JUDGES BEFORE THE CONCOM FINISHED ITS WORK SO SHE WOULD NOT FACE CHARGES OF APPOINTING "MIDNIGHT JUDGES." BENGZON SAID THE PRESIDENT HAD REACTED POSITIVELY, ASKING HOW MANY VOTES THE LEFT HAD BUT APPARENTLY NOT TAKING ON BOARD THE UNRELIABILITY OF HER OWN SUPPORTERS.

7. ROMULO SAID HE HAD MET PRIVATELY LAST FRIDAY -- THE DAY BEFORE MY DISCUSSION WITH LOCSIN (REF A) -- WITH THE PRESIDENT, LOCSIN AND ARROYO. HE HAD COVERED THE
S E C R E T SECTION 02 OF 02 MANILA 23494

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BASES ISSUE CAREFULLY AND FOLLOWED UP WITH A PERSONAL MEMORANDUM TO THE PRESIDENT THAT MADE FOUR KEY POINTS:

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A. FORGET THE LEFT AS THEY PROFESS TO OWE YOU NOTHING;
THEIR GOAL IS TO UNDERMINE THE GOVERNMENT;

B. GET YOUR MINISTERS TO CALL THE CENTRIST CONCOM
MEMBERS THEY RECOMMENDED AND CALL IN THEIR CHITS (OR
DO IT YOURSELF);

C. TELL MUNOZ-PALMA AND RAVA TO GO ALL-OUT;

D. COURT BLAS OPLE, WHO CAN BE HELPFUL OR COULD PLAY
PARTISAN POLITICS IF HE SMELLS BLOOD (HE HAS DONE BOTH
SO FAR).

8. ROMULO (AND THE OTHERS) SAID THERE SO FAR HAVE BEEN
"NO SIGNALS" FROM THE PALACE. WITHOUT REVEALING MY
CONVERSATION (REF B), I ASKED WHETHER SPEAKER LAUREL
COULD HELP. ROMULO SAID HE WAS TOO OLD AND HIS
ATTENDANCE WAS SPOTTY. I ASKED ABOUT LOBBYING THE LEFT
TO LAY OFF. THEY SAID THIS WAS WORTHLESS. ROMULO
TERMED THIS WEEK THE CRUCIAL TIME TO LINE UP PRO-CORY
FORCES AS PLENARY VOTING WAS SLATED FOR NEXT WEEK. THE
MODERATES CONTROLLED THE STEERING COMMITTEE AND COULD
JUGGLE THE SCHEDULE A BIT, BUT NOT FOR LONG IF THE
SEPT 2 DEADLINE WAS TO BE MET. ROMULO SAID HE HAD TOLD
CORY, IN HIS PERSONAL MEMO, THAT THERE WAS NO POINT IN
VISITING WASHINGTON IF SHE LOST ON THE BASES ISSUE --
OR ON THE NUCLEARS OR ON PROPOSALS FOR A NEUTRALITY
ZONE -- IN THE CONCOM.

9. I REVIEWED THE CONCOM ISSUE AGAIN JULY 23 WITH
LOCSIN, WHO SAID HE WOULD TAKE IT UP AGAIN WITH THE
PRESIDENT. HE REITERATED MRS. AQUINO'S CONCERN FOR
HER PRESIDENTIAL PREROGATIVES. HE ALSO NOTED HER
RESPONSE TO A QUESTION ON CONCOM AND THE BASES, AT
THE JULY 21 CHAMBER OF COMMERCE FORUM, THAT SHE
PREFERRED THAT CONCOM NOT LEGISLATE, SHE WISHED TO KEEP
HER OPTIONS OPEN AND THAT BUSINESSMEN MAKE THEIR VIEWS
KNOWN TO CONCOM (SEE SEPTTEL).

10. COMMENT: AQUINO CLEARLY HAS THE MESSAGE NOW FROM
SEVERAL FRIENDLY SOURCES. SHE SEEMS PREPARED TO TAKE

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THE ISSUE ON. HER NOSE-COUNTING MAY BE INSPIRING
EXCESSIVE OPTIMISM BECAUSE THE LEFTISTS THEMSELVES ARE
RELATIVELY LIMITED IN NUMBERS. MOREOVER, HER TACTICS
MAY BE DEFICIENT. WE WILL CONTINUE TO KEEP ON THIS,
THROUGH LOCSIN AND ROMULO, WHILE AVOIDING ACTIONS THAT
WOULD JUSTIFY CHARGES OF MEDDLING. I HAVE BRIEFED THE
AMBASSADOR, WHO IS DUE BACK IN THE OFFICE ON FRIDAY.
KAPLAN

END OF MESSAGE

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